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RUEHLB/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT PRIORITY 0495
RUEHSW/AMEMBASSY BERN PRIORITY 0347
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY 0356
RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY 1609
RUEHNY/AMEMBASSY OSLO PRIORITY 0236
RUEHOT/AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PRIORITY 0259
RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH PRIORITY 0625
RUEHJI/AMCONSUL JEDDAH PRIORITY 0082

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 006563

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/01/2016

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [KDEM](#) [MOPS](#) [LE](#) [SY](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: TURKS CONVEY USG CONCERNS TO SARG, BUT STILL
DIFFER ON DEALING WITH DAMASCUS

REF: A. STATE 193090

[1](#)B. ANKARA 6546

[1](#)C. ANKARA 6392

[1](#)D. ANKARA 6490 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: DCM Nancy McEldowney for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (S) SUMMARY: We further discussed U.S. concerns related to Syrian efforts to destabilize Lebanese Prime Minister Siniora's government December 1 with MFA officials and received a read-out of Deputy PM Sener's November 29 meeting with Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. According to MFA, Sener raised U.S. and Turkish concerns and Assad responded predictably denying the SARG intends to destabilize Lebanon. We underlined the need to stiffen the Turkish line and to maintain concerted pressure on Syria if we are to avoid further bloodshed in Lebanon. END SUMMARY

[1](#)2. (S) DCM further discussed ref a points with Turkish MFA Acting Deputy Under Secretary for Middle East Affairs Bozkurt Aran December 1, following her November 30 conversation with outgoing MFA Deputy Under Secretary Uzumcu (ref b). Aran called DCM in to provide a read-out of Turkish Deputy Prime Minister Abdullatif Sener's November 29 meeting with Syrian President al-Assad, indicating that Sener had conveyed messages of concern regarding Syria's role in destabilizing Lebanese PM Siniora's government.

[1](#)3. (S) Aran said Deputy PM Sener had made clear to Assad PM Erdogan's high level of concern about events in Lebanon, noting that Erdogan believes it is a mistake for Hizballah ministers to have left PM Siniora's coalition government because it threatens Lebanon's stability, and to indicate that there is a very negative perception of Syria in the United States that the SARG needs to address.

[1](#)4. (S) Aran reported that Assad responded to Sener by saying that Syria is not opposed to PM Siniora being prime minister, but that Siniora is also not the only alternative. Assad lamented the "misunderstandings" in the international community and in international organizations about Syria's adherence to UNSC Resolution 1701. "Syria cannot alienate its friends in Lebanon," Assad reportedly told Sener.

[1](#)5. (S) Assad went on to say that "Syria can't be expected to support the current Lebanese government given the increasing sectarian divide there" (implying Siniora's government does not adequately reflect the political will of all of Lebanon's

people). Assad added that the West wants to see Siniora stay in power but, if so, it should insist upon a government of national unity to ensure stability. Assad concluded that Syria "sacrificed much for Lebanon" and does not want to see it degenerate into sectarian-based civil strife.

16. (S) DCM expressed gratitude for the GOT's willingness to raise the issue with the SARG, but noted the need for the Turks to press harder and with a greater sense of urgency. As Syria is behind the assassinations of former PM Hariri and Minister Gemayel, the SARG is using Hizballah to launch a campaign aimed at destabilizing PM Siniora's government, the SARG is helping to arm Hizballah, and (should the current situation continue) Lebanon is destined to degenerate once again into sectarian bloodshed, DCM stressed the need for the GOT to take a more definitive stand in demanding positive Syrian action.

17. (S) Aran responded that while the GOT does share our concerns about the situation in Lebanon, it differs on how to deal with Damascus, adding that, "together with the Europeans we believe a different approach is needed." DCM underlined the need for the international community to remain united in opposing Syrian interference in Lebanon, noting that the SARG has only responded under pressure from a concerted international community effort.

18. (S) COMMENT: Uzumcu's departure as Under Secretary has left Aran -- one of the MFA's weakest players -- in charge of Middle East issues at a difficult moment. Ambassador will raise our concerns with PM Advisor Davutoglu on December 2 to help ensure the right message is conveyed on this and other issues while Erdogan is in Tehran.

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